



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

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August 30, 2015

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization, WC Docket No. 11-42,
Telecommunications Carriers Eligible for Universal Service Support, WC Docket
No. 09-197, Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

We write in support of the vitally important Lifeline Assistance Program, which has played a critical role in helping low-income Bostonians overcome unemployment and other financial obstacles. Lifeline helps ensure that every American household can report emergencies, stay in contact with employers, and connect with family—and Boston's thousands of subscribers are better off for it.

The Federal Communications Commission has done a remarkable job of maintaining and updating the program since it was implemented more than three decades ago. We wholeheartedly support the Commission's intention to modernize the Lifeline program in order to make it more effective for society today. We find, however, that the current slate of proposed changes will undermine the purpose of Lifeline while restricting and distorting access to its benefits for Bostonians who rely on this service.

We are concerned that the proposed voucher system and the change in eligibility determination authority will create more hurdles to access for residents in need of this program. We also think the voucher system will create new opportunities for waste and fraud. In addition, though broadband would be a boon to many low-income households, the current proposal adds it at the expense of traditional phone services, which are at the heart of the Lifeline program. That these changes are untested gives us additional unease. Broadband service should be offered in addition to, not instead of, traditional phone services.


Lifeline provides indispensable telecommunication services. We understand that it is important to regularly update rules to manage the program. However, these proposed changes will drastically change a much-needed and well-run program into a series of bureaucratic hurdles and complicated accessibility issues. We urge you to reconsider this proposal in favor of proven solutions that work for—not against—consumers.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns and respectfully ask that you reject the proposed changes to this valuable program.

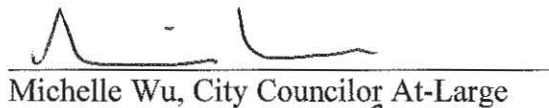
Sincerely,



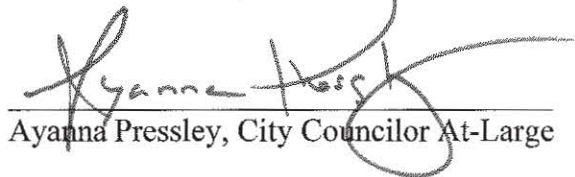
Michael Flaherty, City Councilor At-Large



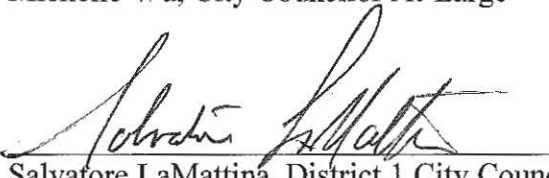
Stephen Murphy, City Councilor At-Large



Michelle Wu, City Councilor At-Large



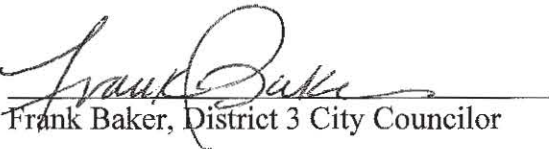
Ayanna Pressley, City Councilor At-Large



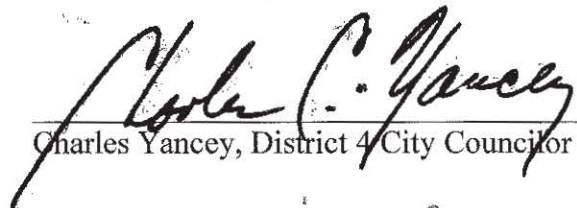
Salvatore LaMattina, District 1 City Councilor



Bill Lemaire, District 2, Council President



Frank Baker, District 3 City Councilor



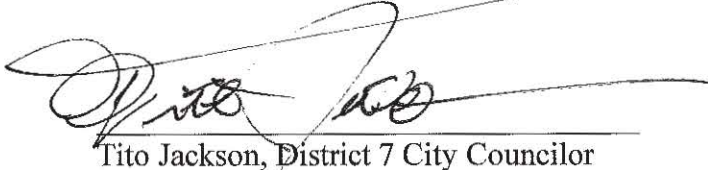
Charles Yancey, District 4 City Councilor



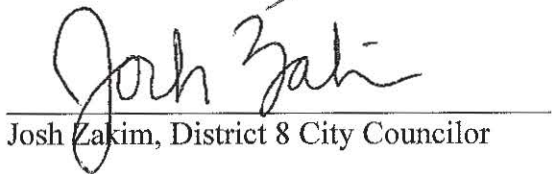
Tim McCarthy, District 5 City Councilor



Matt O'Malley, District 6 City Councilor



Tito Jackson, District 7 City Councilor



Josh Zakim, District 8 City Councilor



Mark Ciommo, District 9 City Councilor

cc: Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly